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Out on the global stage: Authenticity, interpretation and orientalism in Japanese coming out narratives

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Abstract

In recent years in Anglophone countries and the societies of northern Europe, the 'coming out' narrative has emerged as the primary genre through which individuals who identify as lesbian and gay narrate their lives. Through the wide reach of western gay print media and also sites on the Internet, this discourse is also gaining ground in societies where 'sexuality' has not traditionally been a privileged site of 'identity.' In the 1990s, Japan, like other societies in Asia, underwent a 'gay boom' in which new, primarily western terminology, began to be deployed in an attempt to describe and speak for previously silenced or ignored sexual minorities. 'Coming out' (*kaminguauto*) is now a relatively common term not only in Japan's gay media, but through the work of gay activists such as Itō Satoru, occurs even in mainstream publications such as the *Mainichi shimbun*.

This new visibility of Japanese gay men and lesbians who articulate their identities in a manner very similar to activists in the west has been heightened by two recent English books *Queer Japan* and *Coming Out in Japan*. While acknowledging the need to listen to a plurality of voices from Japan, this paper problematises the way in which the coming out narratives in these books have been framed by their western translators. In the introductions to both books, Japan is (once again) pictured as a feudal and repressive society. In their efforts to let the homosexual subaltern speak, the translators fall into the common orientalist paradigm of once more homogenising the Japanese people even as they attempt to use the stories of their homosexual narrators to break down the myth of Japanese homogeneity.

Keywords

japanese, narratives, coming, stage, authenticity, out, orientalism, interpretation, global

Disciplines

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Out on the Global Stage

Authenticity, Interpretation and Orientalism in
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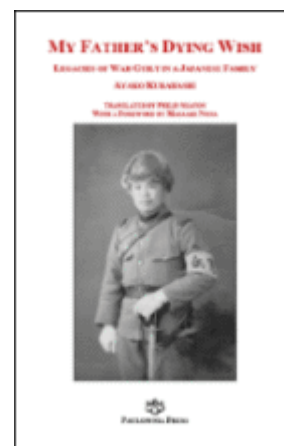
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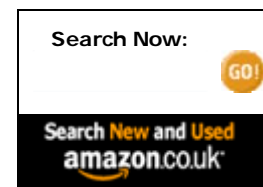


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Abstract

In recent years in Anglophone countries and the societies of northern Europe, the 'coming out' narrative has emerged as the primary genre through which individuals who identify as lesbian and gay



narrate their lives. Through the wide reach of western gay print media and also sites on the Internet, this discourse is also gaining ground in societies where 'sexuality' has not traditionally been a privileged site of 'identity.' In the 1990s, Japan, like other societies in Asia, underwent a 'gay boom' in which new, primarily western terminology, began to be deployed in an attempt to describe and speak for previously silenced or ignored sexual minorities. 'Coming out' (*kaminguauto*) is now a relatively common term not only in Japan's gay media, but through the work of gay activists such as Itō Satoru, occurs even in mainstream publications such as the *Mainichi shimbun*.

This new visibility of Japanese gay men and lesbians who articulate their identities in a manner very similar to activists in the west has been heightened by two recent English books *Queer Japan* and *Coming Out in Japan*. While acknowledging the need to listen to a plurality of voices from Japan, this paper problematises the way in which the coming out narratives in these books have been framed by their western translators. In the introductions to both books, Japan is (once again) pictured as a feudal and repressive society. In their efforts to let the homosexual subaltern speak, the translators fall into the common orientalist paradigm of once more homogenising the Japanese people even as they attempt to use the stories of their homosexual narrators to break down the myth of Japanese homogeneity.

Introduction

Recently I was involved in organising an academic conference for researchers working on queer identities, communities and histories in the Asia Pacific region in which the over-representation of academics with a Caucasian background was identified as a problem by some participants. One would-be participant went so far as to insist that he would only speak on a panel with other researchers who were actual members of the communities they were studying. It is not normal academic practice to insist that a researcher should come from the community that he or she researches, after all there are English professors of Japanese and Japanese professors of English. If it is possible, for example, to study Japanese politics without oneself being a Japanese politician, why shouldn't a non-Japanese or non-gay identified person be able to study homosexuality in

Japan? [\[1\]](#)

Of course, it may be argued that 'being gay' is not at all similar to becoming a politician in that the latter is an identity choice whereas sexual identity is the expression of a biological or at least psychological essence. Yet, there is a growing body of evidence that sexual identities are as much cultural artefacts as any other expression of selfhood. Recent research into AIDS such as that conducted by Coxon [\[2\]](#) in the UK and Dowsett [\[3\]](#) in Australia has shown that 'men who have sex with men' and 'gay men' are not coterminous groups. Indeed, as Goode points out 'regarding oneself as gay - in the vocabulary of some, recognising that one *is* a homosexual - is not something that happens automatically ... there is considerable independence between engaging in homosexual behavior ... and adopting a homosexual identity.'[\[4\]](#) It is therefore problematic to claim that there is a fixed, unitary and authentic 'homosexual' standpoint which can and should be used as an arbiter of all issues surrounding 'homosexuality'.

I must stress that I do acknowledge that the positionality of a researcher in relation to his or her field of research both can and should be questioned. But, I want also to argue that the heightened sensitivity regarding issues of gender, race and sexuality has tended to confer onto the statements and experiences of people speaking from subaltern gendered, raced or sexualised positions, a kind of authenticity that deters academics from subjecting them to the same kind of scrutiny as is typical of other cultural productions. I suggest that this tendency has resulted in two books that confuse rather than clarify issues surrounding homosexuality in Japan: Barbara Summerhawk et al.s' *Queer Japan*, a collection of interviews with a variety of sexual minorities, and Francis Conlan's translation of Itō Satoru and Yanase Ryūta's *Coming Out in Japan* [\[5\]](#) which details their attempt to live together as a gay couple.

Although not 'academic' books in that they do not attempt to engage with lesbian and gay theory or the problems which can arise when trying to analyse complex social constructions such as '(homo)sexuality' across cultures, both volumes have been translated by researchers working within an academic context. [\[6\]](#) Barbara Summerhawk is herself resident in Japan and queer identified and it might be supposed that she speaks with some authority about the situation facing lesbians and gay men in Japan. [\[7\]](#) Even though neither book was released with a primarily academic readership in mind, given the paucity of material relating to minority sexualities in modern Japan, it is not surprising to find both texts on university courses relating to Japanese sexuality and gender. It is, then, primarily to this academic readership that I address this paper in an attempt to provide a broader framework than that offered in the front-

matter of either book for contextualising the narratives offered.^[8] However, before turning to these texts, I would like to say something more about the peculiarly privileged position that 'identity' has come to occupy in western characterisations of the self.

The Modern Quest for 'Identity'

In the modern west, and increasingly in other areas of the world, sexuality and ethnicity have coalesced into two primary nodes of individuation which interact with many other factors such as gender, class and education to create characteristically modern forms of subjectivity. At a recent conference on sexuality and human rights, Mark Johnson commented that

Individuals are increasingly subjected to, and colonized by, discourses of identity (be it ethnic, national, gender, or sexual) to the extent that the compulsion to identify oneself as something or other is now becoming almost hegemonic, and all action or behaviour is read in terms of the occupation or transgression of this or that identity.^[9]

Johnson here touches upon what has become a split between academic and activist approaches to identity. Activists tend to insist upon an essentialised and rather fixed notion of identity in order to generate feelings of solidarity between otherwise disparate peoples.^[10] Yet, academics like Johnson are suspicious of the supposed liberatory force of identity politics because fixed notions of selfhood although empowering some members of a community also tend to disenfranchise others whose experience does not fit the paradigm. Stuart Hall (speaking of ethnic identities) also problematises what he calls the 'existential reality' that underpins the modern discourse of identity. He says that the ways in which we talk about identity contains 'the notion of the true self, some real self inside there, hiding inside the husks of all the false selves that we present to the rest of the world. It is a kind of guarantee of authenticity. Not until we get really inside and hear what the true self has to say do we know what we are "really saying".'^[11] Academic research has demonstrated the contingent nature of models of selfhood particularly as they relate to 'race' and 'sexuality,' Hall going so far as to speak of this model of the authentic, unitary self as being 'finished.'

However, one place in which it lives on is in the recently emerging genre of 'coming out narratives'. In his book *Gay Lives: Homosexual Autobiography from John Addington Symonds to Paul Monette*,^[12] Paul Robinson looks at the various ways in which men who are sexually attracted to other men have narrated this desire in the context of their life stories. Over the course of a century of writing, he traces a movement from

diversity to uniformity in the ways in which homosexual desire has been explained, discussed and represented, culminating in the post-1960s 'coming out story.' Robinson argues that 'coming out' has become the controlling factor in the narrative structure of the 'gay life' and represents a kind of conversion narrative in which 'phoniness versus authenticity, nothingness versus life'.^[13] He questions the usefulness of the coming out narrative when, in the face of the multiple ways in which homosexual desire has been narrated in previous periods and across cultures, he inquires 'what explains why this particular version of a homosexual life is now the only one we tell ourselves?'^[14] While endorsing the 'psychic truth and political effectiveness' of many of these stories, he cannot help but express frustration with the 'formulaic, even oppressive, predictability' of all conversion narratives.^[15]

Ken Plummer, too, in *Telling Sexual Stories*^[16] argues that 'stories of "homosexuality" have recently changed' and increasingly focus on 'coming out' which he terms 'a dominant narrative'.^[17] These tales can be heard everywhere: 'in biographies, edited collections of letters and interviews, in poetry, on tapes, on film, on chat shows, in newspapers ...' ^[18] As Plummer argues, coming out is now 'a global story since many of the tales told criss-cross their way around the world'^[19]. The coming-out narratives offered in *Queer Japan* and *Coming Out in Japan* fit the model of the Euro-American stories analysed by Robinson and Plummer. When Plummer wonders just how the 'microscopic experiences' of same-sex desire, in the twentieth century suddenly become 'a major way of being in the world,'^[20] he could be reflecting on the life stories of Itō, Yanase or of many of the contributors to *Queer Japan*.

Sexual Discourse in Japan

The proliferation of queer narratives in Japan is not new, extensive gay (male) print media have existed since the early 1970s, yet the six nationally distributed gay magazines are primarily pornographic and contain scant, if any, reference to gay identity, activism or lifestyle.^[21] There is, however, a tradition of gay activism in Japan dating back to the late 1970s, Tōgō Ken having made several unsuccessful bids for a seat in the national Diet as an openly gay man. However, Tōgō's cross-dressing and camp persona, aspects normally associated with the entertainment world, have led to him being marginalised by both gay^[22] and mainstream media. The media themselves have, within very restricted boundaries, provided a place for gender nonconformist men (less so women) to express themselves. Popular transgendered *tarento* (talents) include 'Peter,' ^[23] Miwa Akihiro^[24] and Mikawa Ken'ichi^[25] who regularly appear on television shows in feminine attire. The media critics and brothers Ōsugi and Piiko, camp but not cross-dressed, often

appear as discussants on panel shows and have been publicly open about their homosexuality.

However, it was not until the early 1990s that mainstream media saw a 'gay boom'[26] during which popular magazines and journals and to a lesser extent TV and film began to take an interest in Japan's gay subculture thus making information about gay meeting places and lifestyles more widely available. From this time, lesbian and gay rights organisations that were modelled more on the activist style prevalent in Europe and the US began to develop. One of the most prominent of these has been *Ugoku Gei to Rezubian no Kai* (also known as AKĀ or OCCUR) which launched and won a well-publicised anti-discrimination case against the Tokyo Municipal Authority in 1994.[27]

For the first time, this widespread media interest enabled gay men and lesbians to present their own coming out narratives to an audience outside of the gay press. These included Fushimi Noriaki's *Private Gay Life* (1991)[28], Kakefuda Hiroko's *On Being 'Lesbian'* (1992)[29] and Itō Satoru's *Two Men Living Together: My Gay Pride Declaration* (1993)[30]. These writers discussed English terms such as 'gay' (*gei*), 'lesbian' (*rezubian*), 'gay pride' (*gei puraido*) and coming out (*kamingu auto*) and the interest paid to their stories ensured that English loanwords such as *gei*, *rezubian* and *kamu auto* (come out) were widely reported in the media. One result of the gay boom has been that recently coined English terminology for describing a whole range of queer sexualities is now widely dispersed, although as I have argued in other work[31], it is by no means clear that these terms are understood in the same way by all Japanese people.[32] The gay boom also coincided with the development of the Internet in Japan and the Net is now host to thousands of sites with a wide variety of gay and lesbian related information as well as sites dedicated to other sexually non-conformist minorities such as transsexuals, bisexuals and a whole range of fetishists.[33] These sites include [Sukotan Plan](#), a gay-rights Internet page run by Itō and Yanase. Indeed, Itō and his partner Yanase, who have published several books in Japanese about the problems they experienced when coming out and setting up a home together, have become Japan's most famous 'gay couple' (*gei kappuru*) and are regularly cited in Japanese media as spokespersons for the Japanese gay community.[34] Itō is also becoming known in the west as Japan's most high-profile gay activist due to his exposure in English-language media. This has included the appearance of a brief essay by Itō in Summerhawk et al.'s book *Queer Japan*[35], interviews with Itō in Japan's English-language press[36] and the release of Itō and Yanase's book [Coming Out in Japan](#) by Melbourne's recently established [Trans Pacific Press](#)

Orientalising 'Japan'

Given the extreme paucity of sources in English relating to homosexuality in Japan, there is a tendency for any book that is published to be read as authoritative simply because there are no other sources available for comparison. One consequence of the 'coming out' model developed in *Queer Japan* and *Coming Out in Japan* is that Itō, Yanase and other gay activists who closely embody familiar models of gay identity produced in the west, are held up as role models. They are presented as being more advanced than their same-sex desiring peers for whom the model of homosexual identity they are pioneering is neither a necessary nor a desired consequence of their same-sex attraction. Summerhawk, for instance, states that 'Itoh and his partner Yanase represent not only a role model for other gay men, but also a source of "hopes and dreams" to those wanting to escape the arrogant Japanese myths of homogeneity and harmony'.^[37] Openly gay Australian Senator Brian Grieg, too, in his preface to the first part of *Out in Japan*, speaks of Itō and Yanase's experience as 'a manual for others to follow'.^[38] Reviews of *Queer Japan* have tended to accept Summerhawk's representation of Japanese society as cruel and repressive, one reviewer going so far as to brand Japan 'a subtle sexual Gulag'.^[39] One problem with the unqualified activist model of gay identity expressed in both *Queer Japan* and *Coming Out in Japan* is that it assumes the superiority of a politicised 'out' gay sensibility. Yet, as Stuart Hall points out, the strict insistence on one 'authentic' mode of identity always 'provide[s] a kind of silencing in relation to another'.^[40] One of the unfortunate tendencies in both books is to dismiss the lives and the opinions of Japanese lesbians and gay men who do not support the coming out model as well as representations of Japanese lesbians and gay men in the media that are not judged politically correct.

Summerhawk's introduction, in particular, is full of serious misreadings of cultural representations of homosexuality in Japan.^[41] For instance, she gives a very negative reading of *Dōsōkai* (Alumni Reunion), the first television soap drama to focus on Japan's gay subculture aired in 1993. Summerhawk states that *Dōsōkai* 'featured a gay character who was forever the "baddy" in getting in the way of a relationship between a man and a woman and was eventually murdered, necessarily wiped from existence'.^[42] What she fails to mention is that the husband's lover (who was actually bisexual) not only became the father of the wife's child^[43] but was allowed to sleep with her husband in the marital bed with her full cooperation. In the final scene of the series the husband, wife and the baby son of the husband's dead lover are shown walking down the street when the husband is suddenly transfixed by the sight of a construction worker who closely resembles his dead lover. The wife's response is to approach the man and invite him back for dinner. Despite the murder of the husband's lover, the series hardly dispenses with him in order to reassert the centrality of the heterosexual

family. Rather than read this story as an example of Japanese society's commitment to normative models of heterosexuality, it would make more sense to discuss it in terms of traditional literary genres where the conflict between social obligations (*giri*) and personal feelings (*ninjō*) usually result in tragedy. [44]

Summerhawk, drawing upon an essay by Itō, also gives a very negative reading of Japanese gay men's psychological well being. She argues that 'a majority of Japanese gay men live in contradiction, a constant struggle with the inner self, even to the point of cutting off emotions and the denial of their own oppression'[45]. This argument leaves little space for same-sex desiring men or women who do not fit the 'gay identity' model to articulate their desires and denies the validity of other models of sexual expression. Indeed, those who fall outside the identity model are disenfranchised, their experience silenced by the criticism that they are 'in denial' and a new binary is promoted: one is either an 'out' or a 'closeted' homosexual. The result is that yet another hegemonic pattern of 'sexual development' is established.

This puts non-Japanese researchers like myself in a difficult position when arguing that the statements and publications of Japanese gay activists are not brute, unadulterated 'facts' about Japan but, like all cultural products, are in need of analysis, contextualisation and interpretation by the researcher. As Stuart Hall warns 'it is not possible to use oral histories and testimonies, as if they are just literally, the truth. They also have to be read. They are also stories, positionings, narratives.'[46] The translators and editors of *Queer Japan* and *Coming Out in Japan* have not made any attempt to analyse or interpret the narratives that they reproduce; instead the voices of the Japanese speakers are taken as authoritative and unproblematic. In almost any other field of the social sciences, this would not be acceptable practice, so why does it happen here? I suggest that these narratives are accepted 'as is' because the translators of both volumes are either queer-identified or queer-friendly westerners who recognise a synchronicity between their own experience and those described by the queer-identified Japanese whose voices are reproduced in the texts. Because the narratives contained in these Japanese texts fit the 'master narrative' of 'coming out' so well, any potential differences or counter-positions are overlooked, sidestepped or dismissed.

Nowhere in the introductory matter to either text is the nature of the 'experience' described by the Japanese narrators subjected to scrutiny. I do not mean to suggest that the life stories of the Japanese narrators are somehow dishonest or mistaken but, rather, that 'experience' cannot be taken as a given. As Scott argues '[E]xperience is at once always already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation'.[47] She goes on to criticise the

reductionist manner in which 'experience' is often utilised as a touchstone for reality, a means of establishing knowledge that is 'unassailable.' However, as she points out, this is only possible to the extent that 'the processes of identity production ... and the politics of its construction'[48] are overlooked. In my own work with gender nonconformist and same-sex desiring men in Japan (not all of whom identify as 'gay')[49] I was often struck by the conciliatory tone adopted by some informants who had experienced seemingly harsh treatment at the hands of others when their sexual orientation became apparent. For instance, one man wrote to me that:

For some people, small things can become a huge wave and carry them away because the values that people place on different things are different ... It's to be expected that you can't always understand what it is that upsets other people, especially with regard to being gay. Although I've been rejected by my parents and beaten, I don't feel bad and live a happy life.

As I commented in earlier work, 'My informants tended not to "other" heterosexual society in a confrontationist discourse which posited society and its institutions as somehow against them. Instead, many of the men I spoke to tried to understand why it might be difficult for others to accept their homosexual inclination.'[50] It seems to me unhelpful to suggest, as Summerhawk does, that men such as this are simply in 'denial of their own oppression.'[51] Rather, it is important to look at the local meanings working within Japanese society that make this non-confrontational approach meaningful to those men who adopt it.

The narrators featured in both *Queer Japan* and *Coming Out in Japan* are either gay activists themselves or members of feminist and activist organisations and it is not surprising that their stories describe scenes of conflict. A great deal of research has highlighted the discrimination faced by a number of minorities in Japan who are stigmatised because of their perceived class, ethnic or lifestyle differences. Both books are useful to the extent that they illustrate the limits of Japan's supposed 'tolerance' of sexual nonconformity which, like other forms of difference, is accepted so long as it remains invisible.[52]

However, the tendency to generalise the experience of these particular narrators has resulted in the lives of members of all sexual minority groups in Japan being represented as a constant struggle for individual freedom against an almost totalitarian regime. For instance, Conlan tells us in the introduction to *Out in Japan* that Japanese people are characterised by their 'Confucianist mentality, which favours uniformity and authoritarianism,'[53] and that 'traditionally held conservative,

mainstream attitudes are so deeply ingrained in the Japanese psyche that they are virtually sacred'.^[54] Needless to say, these 'feudal values'^[55] are the main reason that non-conformity is 'held in contempt'^[56] and that 'bringing about social change is even more difficult in Japan than in the west'.^[57] The translator comments that during a recent trip to Japan he was struck by 'the imbalance between levels of technology and social attitudes',^[58] the latter having moved forward in Japan, if at all, 'by a negligible amount'.^[59] The impression is that 'Japan', despite its status as a technological superpower, lags behind the west in terms of social and moral development.^[60] Arjun Appadurai calls this tendency to characterise individuals and social collectives in terms of an affective core that can rarely be transformed, and a collective conscience that is not easily changed, 'primordialist'.^[61] It is no surprise, as he points out, that 'this linkage of the infancy of individuals and the immaturity of groups is made with the greatest comfort about the nations of the Non-Western world'.^[62]

Explaining Japanese people's perceived negative attitude towards homosexuality in terms of their 'feudal' mentality is particularly ironic^[63] given that male-male homosexual relations were not only common throughout Japan's 'feudal' period (1600 to 1867) but were, in fact, highly valued in certain circumstances.^[64] Indeed, recent research shows that antagonism towards homosexuality is a characteristic of *modern* Japan and deeply tied in with notions of 'civilisation' and 'modernity' that Japan appropriated from the West during its period of rapid modernisation in the Meiji (1867-1912) and Taishō (1912- 1925) eras.^[65]

It is worth bearing in mind the translator's opening comments about life in Japan when considering the actual events narrated in the book. Despite the very real psychological trauma that coming to terms with their homosexuality obviously caused both Itō and Yanase, the positive results following on from their coming out causes the reader to wonder why they suffered such anxieties. For instance, when, after many years of soul-searching, Itō finally came out to his mother, her response was not to throw him out of the house but to say that she had suspected for a long time and that it was important for him to live in such a manner as to bring him happiness. Yanase's coming out, too, met with a similarly positive reception from his mother and sister. Indeed, when Itō and Yanase decide to live together as a 'gay couple' both mothers met and exchanged similar sorts of pleasantries as would normally accompany a heterosexual engagement. Yanase's mother even began to give him cooking lessons. In fact, much of the trauma caused by moving in together seems to have been caused by fights over the use of the washing machine, the sharing of household chores and the inability of either partner to cook.

Again, Itō (who is a schoolteacher) went through considerable anxiety about using his own name in his first book about homosexuality. Would he or wouldn't he lose his job? Would he or wouldn't he be rejected by his colleagues and students? Yet, after he finally presented a copy of the book to his school principal, declaring that not only was he a homosexual but that he lived with a same-sex partner, Itō writes that 'I am delighted to be able to report that he accepted this as being a personal matter and assured me that he would not fire me on the basis of my sexuality.'^[66] The expected negative responses from colleagues and students consistently fail to materialise. Indeed, when the mother of one of Itō's private students expressed anxiety about him visiting Itō in his home, the youth took her to charge, pointing out the high esteem in which he held Itō and the many ways he was indebted to him. Itō reports that 'This message seemed to get through to his mother. From then on she was happier seeing him off whenever he came to visit me than she ever had been before.'^[67] If anything, Itō seems to gain, not lose respect, in the eyes of his associates after the publication of his first book about homosexuality. Given the largely positive responses that Itō received after his declaration of homosexual identity, including from the media, it is odd to find the translator picturing Japan as a feudal environment in his introductory remarks.

Both books tend to discuss Japan in terms familiar to us from earlier Orientalist treatments. Japanese society is pictured as static and backward because of the feudal way of thinking characteristic of Japanese people. Japan is pictured as somehow immune to the rapid transformations in social attitudes that have overtaken western societies. Japanese society is homogenised as uniformly 'oppressive' while gay people are simultaneously homogenised as all equally 'oppressed' in a manner similar to the way in which middle-class feminist texts from the first world have been criticised for reducing the complex lives of women in postcolonial nations to lives characterised solely by 'oppression'. Criticising the tendency of western scholars to always take their own experience as the mean by which to judge others, Chandra Mohanty asks 'What is it about cultural Others that make it so easy to analytically formulate them into homogeneous groupings with little regard for historical specificities?'^[68]

Reading lesbian and gay lives in Japan simply in terms of oppression is not only insensitive to the incidents described within both books that trouble such a black-and-white reading but is also completely out of touch with recent trends in Japanese society. Japanese media do, in fact, often feature frank, nuanced and intelligent discussions of sexuality, including matters relating to homosexuality and gay rights. High-brow journals such as *imago*^[69] and *Gendai shisō*^[70] have featured favourable

discussions of gay rights in Japan and the popular press regularly profiles a variety of queer-identified people.^[71] The treatment is sometimes sensationalistic, but this is also true of mainstream media representations of gay people in western societies.

Anyone familiar with the Japanese media would find it difficult to characterise their treatment of sexuality as 'feudal.' For instance, one recent issue dedicated to AIDS in the trendy lifestyle magazine *Da Vinci*,^[72] enquires whether 'In the midst of a society where sexual orientation has become a matter of personal freedom, are you going to get into bed with a partner you have just met and ask "Have you had an AIDS test?"' ^[73] Furthermore, the media section of Itō and Yanase's Web site mentions over forty articles that they themselves have published in a wide variety of mainstream media. These include six brief essays on the topic of sexuality by Itō in the *Mainichi shimbun*, one of Japan's top three national dailies, under the title 'I want to live like myself.'^[74] The amount of media space offered to activists like Itō does not really support the characterisation of Japan as a society in which non-conformity is held in contempt. Gay media, too, are booming. *Queer Japan*,^[75] a new glossy lifestyle oriented magazine primarily aimed at gay men was launched in 1999 and is available in mainstream book stores. Also, even a cursory glance at the thousands of Japanese Internet sites created by members of sexual minorities is sufficient to dispel the misconception that queer-identified Japanese are somehow voiceless or that their experience is primarily one of neglect, disenfranchisement and oppression.^[76]

The main failing of *Queer Japan* and *Coming Out in Japan* is that the translators never question whether or not very recent developments in the way minority rights are conceptualised in western societies can be held up as a template for Japan.^[77] After all, much of the protest made by lesbian and gay activists in the US, UK, Australia and other Anglophone societies was directed against laws which made male-male sex illegal. However, except for a brief period between 1873 and 1881,^[78] Japan, has never criminalised sex between men and consequently does not impose unequal age of consent laws relating to hetero and homosexual acts as is common throughout Anglo-Saxon cultures.^[79] Today, Japanese gay men who meet together for sex in both semi-private (gay bath houses) and 'public' venues (such as parks) are considerably less likely to come under police surveillance^[80] than are men in Anglophone societies where male homosexuality is still subject to specific laws and regulations that are not applied to sex between men and women.^[81]

Even in Summerhawk's collection, drawn as it is from members of lesbian and gay activist organisations where overtly politicised rhetoric may be expected, there are dissenting voices (albeit not

represented in Summerhawk's introductory comments) that question the usefulness of western identity paradigms. One man comments that:

Japan has a very different history when it comes to discrimination. In my twenty years of living as a gay man in Japan I have never had to face termination of employment because I was gay. In the conversations that flowed around me I have never come across talk of someone being thrown in prison because he was gay ... In Japan there is no religious concept of homosexuality as a vice, drawing out a sense of self contempt as [in] the Christian religion ... Because of all this, I think it is more difficult to recognize and understand the concept of gay rights. For me personally in Tokyo, subscribing to this concept is like carrying around someone else's baggage.[\[82\]](#)

Just as Japanese gay men and lesbians are starting from a rather different position than that experienced by many western gays in their attempt to gain increased visibility, it can also be expected that the end point reached will also differ.

Coming Out into a Global System?

Other researchers, notably Manalansan[\[83\]](#) in relation to the Philippines, Chao[\[84\]](#) on Taiwan, Barnard[\[85\]](#) on South Africa and Chiang[\[86\]](#) regarding the Chinese diaspora, have questioned the universalising rhetoric of 'lesbian and gay liberation' in relation to indigenous constructions of sexual identity. Chiang comments that 'proclamations of an "international" lesbian and gay movement risk subsuming heterogeneous forms of sexuality under a gay identity that is implicated in a specifically Western and bourgeois construction of subjectivity, with its themata of voice, visibility and coming out.'[\[87\]](#) Manalansan also complains that western models of identity are often represented as more progressive or evolved than indigenous constructions, the result being that 'all same-sex phenomena are placed within a developmental and teleological matrix that ends with Western "gay" identity.'[\[88\]](#) Barnard, too, criticises the prevalence of 'lesbian and gay organizers in the United States who judge the level of "progress" another country is making in the arena of lesbian and gay rights by the uniquely U.S. trajectories of Stonewall, coming out and identity-based civil rights.'[\[89\]](#) Wim Lunsing, in his work on Japanese constructions of homosexuality, has complained of the tendency apparent among some Western researchers to analyse Japanese society solely in terms of its 'lack' of sexual categories developed in Anglophone countries. He criticises the assumption that 'gay identity among the Japanese must be strengthened, which implies that Japanese gay

people must become like Americans,'[90] adding that in Japan 'sexual preference is generally not seen as a feature that determines one's personhood more than partially.'[91]

Unfortunately, the way in which the narratives in *Queer Japan* and *Coming Out in Japan* are framed tends to fall into the kind of ethnocentrism warned of above: Western 'gay identity' is offered as a kind of holy grail and other homosexualities are judged solely in terms of denial. The translators accept at face value the gay essentialism of the narrators who tend to posit the sameness of homosexual identity and of homophobia throughout all times and cultures.[92] In fact, essentialist notions of 'homosexuality' underpin most coming out narratives and can be said to characterise the genre. Homosexuality is understood to be an unadulterated 'given' about the personality that is impossible to ignore or disguise.

Itō and Yanase's narrative, in particular, is founded on straightforward, biological assumptions about the nature of 'homosexuality' as well as its universal 'sameness'. For instance, Itō takes comfort in the fact that 'in our species the genes have been programmed such that homosexuals will always exist in our midst.'[93] He also tells us that he is 'a homosexual such as exists in all places and has existed in all ages throughout history.'[94] Despite the psychological comfort that this mode of essentialism may bring, as pointed out earlier, the insistence on one 'authentic' mode of identity leads to silencing in relation to another.[95] Silenced in Itō and Yanase's narrative are the other multiple homosexualities that have traditionally existed in Japan and, in modified forms, are still expressed today.[96]

Throughout the book, Itō draws upon the American gay liberation rhetoric of homosexual pride, identity and empowerment and consistently puts down other individuals and institutions from Japan's gay subculture which challenge this. For instance, he rejects Japan's pioneering gay magazine, *Barazoku*, for its support of what he terms 'sham marriages,'[97] referring to the 'sad fact'[98] that many married men with children seek out affairs with other men and he offers a rather negative reading of male sex workers and of casual sex.[99] Indeed, both Yanase and Itō are convinced of the redemptive power of romantic love, describing in exhausting detail the ways in which they tried to become each other's 'ideal partner.'[100] Yanase also speaks dismissively of the many openly gay 'talents' who often appear on Japanese TV, criticising them for 'cashing in on their gayness.'[101] One of the most prominent of the gay personalities, Osugi, is even accused of 'flaunt[ing] his campness for the camera.'[102] In this model, only the suitably sober and politically astute gay is to be respected.

Yet many Japanese gay men express impatience with this conflict model that sets up a persecuted gay minority against an

antagonistic heterosexual majority. One man writes into Itō's on-line problem page:[\[103\]](#)

I know a guy who is involved in 'gay lib' (*gei ribu*) and it feels like all he goes on about are 'gay rights' (*gei no jinken*), all he does is argue. If you're gay (*gei datte*) you can do anything you want with regard to love (*ren'ai*) and sex (*sekkusu*), so is it really necessary to go on about gay lib? Why is it necessary to support gay lib?[\[104\]](#)

Both *Coming Out in Japan* and *Queer Japan*, focussing as they do on members of gay rights' groups, tend to highlight the voices of gay and lesbian activists and in so doing obscure both the complexity and the variety that exist among non-heterosexual people in Japan. As Lunsing's work has shown,[\[105\]](#) even gay rights organisations differ among themselves in terms of the strategies they advocate for improving the visibility of sexual minorities in Japan. Yet there is little in either book that recognises this diversity.

Conclusion

The now almost hegemonic power of the coming out narrative which is accepted as the only authentic narration of *the* gay life, coupled with a politically correct stance that accepts as unproblematic the voice of the subaltern, have resulted in the narratives in *Queer Japan* and *Coming Out in Japan* as being presented as plain unadulterated facts about Japan. This has given rise to a curious new Orientalism where the 'advanced' and 'liberated' western researcher uses these subaltern voices from Japan to speak to a familiar agenda of Japanese backwardness.

John Treat, among others, has noted what he terms a 'vengeful impulse' in many commentaries on Japanese society that suggest 'despite all their economic successes, the Japanese remain stunted in other, cultural ways';[\[106\]](#) to a certain extent, the framing of the narratives in these two books follows this familiar pattern. In their respective introductions, the western researchers use the voices of their Japanese narrators to confirm, not question, certainties both about their own moral advancement as well as the significance for all peoples in all climates of western-derived notions of lesbian and gay identity. Rather than challenge the stereotypical view that many westerners hold of Japan by giving voice to some of Japan's divergent minorities, these texts actually reinforce hegemonic views of Japan as a less-developed, even barbaric society in which feudal values restrict change and where the human rights that are so central to the western rhetoric of advancement are 'held in contempt.' As with other Orientalist discourses, there is supposed to be something inherent in 'the Japanese psyche' that marks it as different, somehow immune to

the rapid social changes that have overtaken western societies in the process of modernisation. The treatment of lesbians and gays in Japan is used to show that despite Japan's formidable economic and technological power, it still lags behind the west in terms of social and moral advancement. The result is that not only is the western sense of moral superiority *vis-a-vis* the Oriental 'other' further naturalised, but all chance is lost to interpret what same-sex desire might mean in Japan outside of the framework provided by these recently imported western models.

Notes

[1] To illustrate the kind of suspicion that non-Japanese and (presumed) non-gay researchers fall under when attempting to speak about homosexuality in Japan, I reproduce this comment from a Usenet discussion about my book *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan*, (Curzon Press, 2000). A contributor writes 'I still wouldn't trust it [i.e. my book] quite as much as one written from a Japanese "gay" male perspective; though I guess the closest to an ideal would be having two co-writers, a gay Japanese pop-culture studying person, and an American/Australian /Brit/etc., as a kind of way of bridging a gap between the subject and audience.' The correlation between 'identity' and 'authenticity' that underlies this assumption is, as I argue below, highly problematic in an academic context.

[2] Anthony Coxon, *Between the Sheets: Sexual Diaries and Gay Men's Sex in the Era of AIDS*, London: Cassell.

[3] Gary Dowsett, *Practising Desire: Homosexual Sex in the Era of AIDS*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

[4] Erich Goode, *Deviant Behavior*, New York: Prentice Hall, 1997, p. 262. For excellent ethnographies that argue just this point based on material from South America, see Jacobo Schiffer's *Lila's House: Male Prostitution in Latin America*, New York: Haworth Press, 1998 and Josheph Carrier's, *De Los Otros: Intimacy and Homosexuality among Mexican Men*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

[5] For a more detailed critique of this book, see my review in *Intersections*, issue 6. I contacted the publisher in an attempt to discover why this particular book was chosen for translation out of the many recent publications by diverse same-sex attracted individuals in Japan and why only seven pages of front matter were provided in order to contextualise the narrative.

Unfortunately, I received no reply. It is important to point out that ItM is just one among many gay rights activists in Japan who have published books and that his standpoints on a number of issues are contested by other activists. See for example note 22.

[6] Barbara Summerhawk is an English-language lecturer at a Japanese university and Francis Conlan teaches Japanese Studies

at Edith Cowan University, Australia.

[7] I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the effort made by both Barbara Summerhawk (and her co-editors) and Francis Conlan in making available in English material by and about members of some of Japan's gay rights groups. However, I do have serious reservations about the translators' apparent lack of understanding of the historical specificities influencing the development of lesbian and gay identities in Japan. The way in which the narratives in these books have been framed by the translators' comments negatively biases the reader towards the situation facing non-heterosexual people in Japan. Also, neither editor reflects on their own positionality. Indeed, Summerhawk comes close to typifying the 'white westerner' complained of by Ian Barnard who he claims 'uses the trope and privilege of travel and the sanctioned promise of investigating difference to recapitulate a putatively universal and ahistorically transcendent gay identity, and to interpolate the metropolitan traveler as the arbiter and omniscient cataloguer of the queer world.' Ian Barnard, 'The United States and South Africa: (Post)Colonial Queer Theory?' in: *Postcolonial Queer Theories: Intersections and Essays*, John C. Hawley (ed.), Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001, p. 135.

[8] For a general overview of representations of primarily male homosexuality in contemporary Japan see my article 'Male Homosexuality and Popular Culture in Modern Japan,' in [Intersections, issue 3](#); and my *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan: Cultural Myths and Social Realities*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000.

[9] Mark Johnson, Peter Jackson and Gilbert Herdt, 'Critical Regionalities and the Study of Gender and Sexual Diversity in South East and East Asia,' *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, vol. 2, no. 4, October-December, 2000, p. 371.

[10] This is often referred to as 'strategic essentialism.' Although many people are aware of how labels can work to repress as much as forge identities, it is often judged more important to use identity labels as rallying points for activism.

[11] Stuart Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,' in: Anthony King (ed.) *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 43.

[12] Paul Robinson, *Gay Lives: Homosexual Autobiography from John Addington Symonds to Paul Monette*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

[13] Robinson, p. 393.

[14] Robinson, p. 310.

[15] Robinson, p. 393.

[16] Ken Plummer, *Telling Sexual Stories*, London: Routledge, 1999.

[17] Plummer, p. 81

[18] Plummer, p. 82.

[19] Plummer, p. 96.

- [20] Plummer, p. 86.
- [21] For a discussion of Japanese gay magazines, see my *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan*, pp. 127-134.
- [22] My sources in Japan have told me of a recent public war of words between Itō Satoru and veteran gay-rights campaigner Tōgō Ken. TMgM (who often cross-dresses) identifies with the term *okama*, meaning effeminate homosexual (something like 'queen') whereas Itō considers this to be a discriminatory label.
- [23] Peter starred as a transgendered male prostitute in Matsumoto Toshio's 1968 film *Bara no sōretsu* (Funeral procession of roses).
- [24] A transgendered Miwa starred in Fukasaku Kinji's 1968 film *Kuro tokage* (Black lizard).
- [25] Mikawa is a regular on panel shows and always performs in spectacular drag (for the men's team) in the annual New Year's Eve television spectacular *Kōhaku uta gassen* (Red and white song contest).
- [26] On Japan's gay boom, see Wim Lunsing, 'Gay Boom in Japan? Changing Views of Homosexuality,' *Thamyris*, vol. 4, no. 2, Autumn 1997, pp. 267-293; and my *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan*, pp. 32-37.
- [27] For an account of this case see *Queer Japan* p. 206-211. Some of the interviewees for *Queer Japan* were recruited through the active participation of OCCUR and therefore tend to represent the particular bias of this organisation.
- [28] Fushimi Noriaki, *Puraibeeto gei raifu* (Private gay life), Tokyo: Gakuyō shobō, 1991.
- [29] Kakefuda Hiroko, *Rezubian de aru to iu koto* (On being 'lesbian'), Tokyo: Kawade ShobM Shinsha, 1992.
- [30] Itō Satoru, *Otoko futarigarashi: boku no gei puraido sengen* (Two men living together: my gay pride declaration), Tokyo: Tarōjirōsha, 1992.
- [31] McLelland, *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan*, pp. 7-12.
- [32] The term *gei* for instance was first introduced to Japan during the Occupation and at that time was used to refer to *geiboi* (gay boys) or transgendered male prostitutes. It is used in this sense in Matsumoto Toshio's 1968 film *Bara no sōretsu* (Funeral procession of roses). However, in the 1980s this term was displaced by *nyūhāfu* (new half), now the most common term for a transgendered (male) sex worker. Today *gei* still has transgender connotations among the older generation for whom a *geibā* (gay bar) brings up images of a transgender cabaret but among young people it is used in a more political sense and is favoured as a self-referent by activist such as Fushimi Noriaki. Itō Satoru, however, tends to avoid the term *gei*, as does gay rights organisation OCCUR, preferring instead the Chinese-character translation of 'homosexual' (*dōseiaisha*).
- [33] I discuss these sites in Mark McLelland, 'Out and About on Japan's Gay Net,' *Convergence*, vol. 6, no. 3, August 2000.
- [34] Although my sources in Japan tell me that they have

recently split up.

[35] Barbara Summerhawk, Cheiron McMahon and Darren McDonald (eds) *Queer Japan: Personal Stories of Japanese Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transsexuals*, Norwich VT: New Victoria Publishers, 1998.

[36] 'Gay pair lecture at schools in bid to nip prejudice in bud,' *The Japan Times*, Saturday September 28, 1996, and 'Academic Crusade for Homosexual Rights,' *The Daily Yomiuri*, 15 August, 2000.

[37] *Queer in Japan*, p. 14.

[38] *Out in Japan*, p.1.

[39] Darren Johnson in *The Daily Yomiuri* (English edition). No date given but [available on the Web](#)

[40] Hall, 'Old and New Identities,' p. 56.

[41] Many of Summerhawk's assertions about the history of homosexuality in Japan are also factually incorrect. See my review of *Queer Japan* in *Sexualities* vol. 3, no. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 150-153.

[42] *Queer Japan*, p. 12.

[43] In a highly complicated and melodramatic episode the wife, upset by her husband's lack of attention, spends a night on the town where she is picked up by and has sex with a male hustler unaware of the fact that her husband is also sexually involved with the same youth. This sexual tryst results in her becoming pregnant.

[44] See Stephen Miller's 'The (Temporary?) Queering of Japanese TV,' *The Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 39, nos 3/4, 2000, pp. 83-109 for a fuller discussion of this TV drama.

[45] *Queer Japan*, pp. 10-11.

[46] Hall, 'Old and New Identities,' p. 58.

[47] Joan W. Scott, 'Experience,' in: Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (eds), *Feminists Theorize the Political*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 37.

[48] Scott, p. 37.

[49] See particularly my *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan*, chapters 6, 7 & 8; my paper 'The Newhalf Net: Japan's Intermediate Sex Online,' *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, Special Issue: *Queer Webs: Representations of LGBT People and Communities on the World Wide Web*, Vol 7, nos 2/3, April/July 2002; and my 'Private Acts and Public Spaces: Discussion of Male-Male Sex on the Japanese Internet,' in: Nanette Gottlieb and Mark McLelland (eds) *Japanese Cybercultures*, London: Routledge, forthcoming in 2002.

[50] *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan*, p. 198.

[51] *Queer Japan*, p.11.

[52] On the limits of Japanese tolerance of lesbianism see Sharon Chalmers, 'Tolerance, Form and Female Dis-ease: The Pathologisation of Lesbian Sexuality in Japanese Society,' [Intersections issue 6](#).

[53] *Out in Japan*, p. xv.

[54] *Out in Japan*, p. xvi.

- [55] *Out in Japan*, p. xvi.
- [56] *Out in Japan*, p. xvi.
- [57] *Out in Japan*, p. xv.
- [58] *Out in Japan*, p. ix.
- [59] *Out in Japan*, p. xiii.
- [60] Naoki Sakai in 'The West and the Problem of Co-Figuration,' in: *Cultural Studies and Japan*, Leipzig: University of Leipzig Press, 2001, points out that when compared with the 'putative unity of the West' in terms of its 'economic, military, religious, ethnic, civilizational, political, historiographic, gender, and racial categories,' 'Japanese culture and tradition' is inevitably read in terms of its 'lack'.
- [61] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p.141.
- [62] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 141.
- [63] I would like to thank an anonymous referee for pointing this out to me.
- [64] On the institutionalisation of male-male homosexuality among the samurai see Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- [65] See Gregory Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950*, Los Angeles: University of California Press; and Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- [66] *Out in Japan*, p. 233.
- [67] *Out in Japan*, p. 236.
- [68] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,' *Boundary 2*, vol. XII, no. 3/vol. XIII, no. 1, Spring/Fall 1984, p. 340.
- [69] *Imago*, 'Gei riberēshon' (Gay liberation), November 1995, Tokyo: Seidosha
- [70] *Gendai shisō*, 'Rezubian/gei sutadiizu' (Lesbian/gay studies), November 1997, Tokyo: Seidosha.
- [71] See, for example, the interviews in *Takarajima* on 9 December 1993 entitled 'Gei jishin ga tsukushita otoko to otoko ga aishi au imi' (Gays themselves tell all about the real meaning of male/male love).
- [72] *Da Vinci*, January 1999, 'What if the person you loved caught AIDS?' (*Anata no itoshii hito ga eizu ni natte mo*), front cover headline.
- [73] *Da Vinci*, January 1999, p. 20.
- [74] *Jibun rashiku ikitai*.
- [75] Not to be confused with Summerhawk's book. This is the brainchild of Fushimi Noriaki whose writings on homosexuality and its intersections with feminism, consumerism and the transformation in gender relations in contemporary Japan are rather more nuanced than those of Itō.
- [76] See for example my paper 'Out and About on Japan's Gay Net,' *Convergence*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 16-33.

- [77] This failing is apparent in a number of English-language books that attempt to interpret homosexuality in 'other' societies. Barnard, for instance, in 'The United States in South Africa' points out how a recent work on queer identities in South Africa excluded a priori many uniquely black and uniquely South African queer identities through the authors' uncritical deployment of the categories 'gay' and 'gay politics,' p. 137.
- [78] On the introduction and abolition of a law forbidding homosexual 'sodomy,' see Furukawa Makoto, 'The Changing Nature of Sexuality: the Three Codes Framing Homosexuality in Modern Japan,' *The US-Japan Women's Journal English Supplement*, no. 7, 1994, p. 108.
- [79] See my discussion of legislation relating to sex in *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan*, pp. 27-32.
- [80] See my discussion in 'Private Acts and Public Spaces: Discussion of Male-Male Sex on the Japanese Internet,' in: Nanette Gottlieb and Mark McLelland (eds) *Japanese Cybercultures*, London: Routledge, forthcoming in 2002.
- [81] In the UK, for example, the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 only partially decriminalised male homosexuality, making it permissible between *only two men in private*. Sex between more than two men or sex in semi-private areas (such as the backrooms of bars) is illegal and not infrequently prosecuted. See David Bell, 'Pleasure and Danger: the Paradoxical Spaces of Sexual Citizenship,' *Political Geography*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 139-153. These restrictions do not apply in Japan where gay sex venues, like heterosexual ones (*fūzoku kanren eigyō*) are registered with the police.
- [82] *Queer Japan*, p. 153
- [83] Martin F. Manalansan IV, 'In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diaspora Dilemma,' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 2, pp. 425-438, 1995.
- [84] Antonia Chao, 'Global Metaphors and Local Strategies in the Construction of Taiwan's Lesbian Identities,' *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, vol. 2, no. 4, October-December 2000, pp. 377-390.
- [85] Ian Barnard, 'The United States and South Africa: (Post)Colonial Queer Theory?' in: *Postcolonial Queer Theories: Intersections and Essays*, John C. Hawley (ed.), Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- [86] Mark Chiang, 'Coming Out into the Global System,' in: David Eng and Alice Hom (eds) *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- [87] Chiang, p. 386.
- [88] Manalansan, p. 428.
- [89] Barnard, p. 136.
- [90] Wim Lunsing, 'Gay boom in Japan? Changing views of homosexuality,' *Thamyris*, no. 4, p. 284.
- [91] Lunsing, Gay boom, p. 285.
- [92] David Bell and Jon Binnie argue in *The Sexual Citizen: Queer Politics and Beyond*, (London: Cassell, 1995), pp.

116-119, that Anglo-American models of sexual identity are based upon notions of nationhood and citizenship that cannot be exported wholesale without 'McDonaldizing' sexual minorities in societies that have different backgrounds to the modern West.

[93] *Coming Out in Japan*, p.104.

[94] *Coming Out in Japan*, p. 8.

[95] Hall, 'Old and new Identities,' p. 56.

[96] On the variety of same-sex sexualities in Japan, see my papers 'The Newhalf Net: Japan's "Intermediate Sex" On-line', *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, Special Issue: *Queer Webs: Representations of LGBT People and Communities on the World Wide Web*, Vol 7, nos 2/3, April/July 2002; and 'Is there a Japanese "Gay Identity"?' *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 2:4, Autumn 2000, pp. 459-472.

[97] *Coming Out in Japan*, p.24.

[98] *Coming Out in Japan*, p. 56.

[99] *Coming Out in Japan*, pp. 88-91.

[100] *Coming Out in Japan*, p. 58.

[101] *Coming Out in Japan*, p. 200.

[102] *Coming Out in Japan*, p. 336.

[103] For a discussion of other submissions to this page see my paper 'Live Life More Selfishly: An On-line Gay Advice Column in Japan,' *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 103-116.

[104] Also cited in my book *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan*, p. 236, see my discussion of the notion of gay rights in Japan p. 236-239.

[105] Wim Lunsing 'Lesbian and Gay Movements--Between Hard and Soft' in: Claudia Derichs and Anja Oziander (eds), *Soziale Bewegungen in Japan*, Hamburg: Mitteilungen der Vereinigung für Natur und Volkenkunde, 1998; and 'Japan: Finding its Way?' in: Barry Adam (ed.) *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: Nationwide Imprints of a Worldwide Movement*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

[106] John Treat, 'Introduction: Japanese Studies into Cultural Studies,' in: J. Treat (ed.) *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996, p. 8.

About the author

Mark J. McLelland wrote his PhD thesis on representations of homosexuality in the Japanese media, later published as *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan: Cultural Myths and Social Realities* ([Curzon Press](#), 2000). He is currently a postdoctoral fellow in the [Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies](#) at the [University of Queensland](#) where he works on issues to do with the Internet, sexuality and identity in Japan. His latest book *Japanese Cybercultures* (coedited with Nanette Gottlieb) will be released by Routledge in late 2002. He is also co-founder of

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